FROM: PO Box 9007
Berkeley CA 94709 USA

To:

First Class
U.S. Postage
Paid 8¢
Permit 1083
Berkeley, Cal.

First Class

Express Ads

WANTED: Will the person who removed the name plates from the Pacific Railroad Society sleeping car "Bloomington" in Los Angeles in mid-April please return same to PRS, Box 633, Costa Mesa, Calif. 92627. No questions asked. Missing are two stainless steel name plates 2 by 16 inches lettered "Bloomington," and two stainless steel number plates 2 by 8 inches lettered "3503."

Wish to buy two railroad station conductor's box steps. Advise price, whether metal or wood, condition, size, railroad identification, etc. John Walker Farm, Fredonia, N.Y. 14063.

AUTOTRAIN slide needed for completion of a San Francisco State College slide-lecture on railroading. P. J. Lichtanski, 770 Lake Merced Blvd. #823A, San Francisco, California 94132.

FOR SALE - Much railroadiana including public timetables, dining car menus, employee timetables, railroad maps, etc. Send 50¢ for large list. Tom Coval, 21 East Robin Road, Holland PA 18966.

CANADIAN AMTRAK routes should be announced shortly. Submit your name now to get earliest information on reservations for train travel to Canada and Mexico. A complete travel service—trains, planes, ships, hotels, etc. No extra charge over ticket price. Jean Maxwell, 1322 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Phone (415) 549-0360.

NEW FOR '72—72 characters and spaces per line in RTN's Express Ads. You can run your message for as little as $1 (up to 3 lines)! Additional lines 35¢ each, 3/$1. Write Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Watch your message go out FAST!

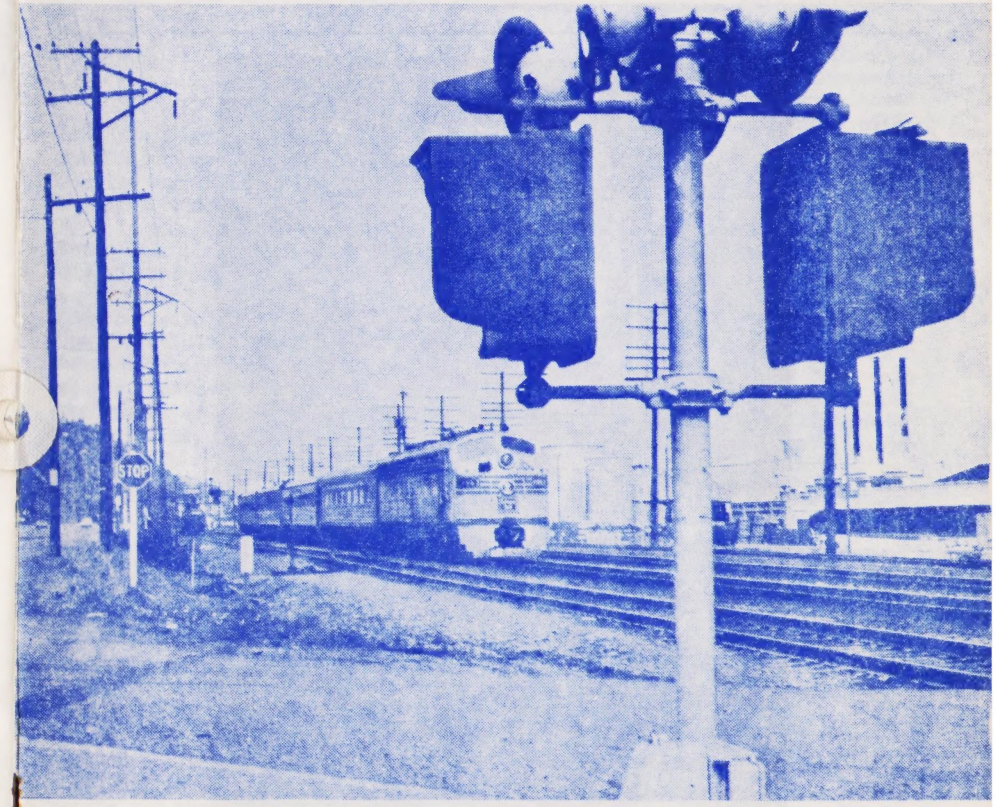
Subscribe to this newsletter. One year (24 issues) by first class mail is just $6.00. Gift subscriptions $4 for 8 months. Box 9007, Berkeley.

TRAVEL ADVENTURES IN BOOKS from Message Media Book Dept. (All prices postpaid; Californians please add applicable sales tax.)
Down the Wild Rivers—A Guide to the Streams of California $4.95.
Combing the Coast: San Francisco thru Big Sur—Coastside Backroads & Background $2.95.
100 North. California Hiking Trails $5.95.
How to Live in the Woods on Pennies a Day $6.95.
On Your Own in the Wilderness $5.00.
Francis Galton's Art of Travel (1872-reprinted) $6.95.
101 Nights in California (1972 Ed.) - Guide with menus to unusual restaurants $2.50.
Trails of the Angeles—100 Hikes in the San Gabriels $4.95.
The Tahoe-Yosemite Trail $2.95.
Sketches of Early California $6.95.
How to Buy and Sell a Used Car in Europe $1.50.
Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

Vol. 2 No. 9
May 1, 1972
#35



First Anniversary

Amtrak

LETTERS

I read with interest the differing views you and Paul Rayton presented regarding the ICC's proposed regulations. While the National Association of Railroad Passengers is participating in the case, we are under no illusions about the futility of shaping up Amtrak thru the imposition of detailed regulations. Nor are we confident that the ICC has any deep desire to act vigorously and promptly in this area. Accordingly, we have refrained from commenting on a majority of the regulations, and have concentrated our fire on fundamentals which Amtrak either by words, actions, or omissions seems to be ignoring. These include reservations systems, on-time performance, and adequate capacity for seasonal and peak periods.

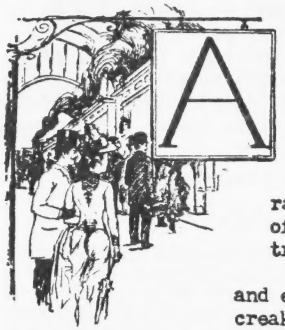
Anthony Haswell, Chairman
NARP

Washington, D.C.

"Frankly, I don't see where Amtrak will get the equipment to run this train daily."

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 2, No 9 (Whole No. 35), May 1, 1972.
Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709. Subscription $6 a year; 25¢ a copy.
STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Richard Tower, Research Editor; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; John ("Doug") Ellis, East Coast Photographer.
Projected mailing date for this issue: May 10.

One year of Amtrak



Amtrak's first year of responsibility for most of the nation's passenger trains ended on a distinctly discordant note. While Amtrak was busily announcing service increases for the summer and preparing an exhibit of refurbished equipment at Washington D.C., members of Congress were taking potshots at the corporation for its go-slow attitude toward revitalizing rail travel. The news media were taking the occasion of Amtrak's anniversary to summarize the passenger train situation to date in largely negative terms.

The New York Times (May 3) called Amtrak "faltering," and editorialized that "All the problems of featherbedding, creaky roadbeds and general decrepitude that contributed to the disappearance of passenger trains are still holding back their return." It charged that Amtrak has been unable to "shake railroad management out of its torpor." But it pointed to the improved Northeast service and called for such improvements "on a nationwide basis." It called the idea behind Amtrak "a sound one."

In the same day's paper, Amtrak ran a two-page ad (with a very dramatic Metroliner photo) headed "What has Amtrak been doing for the past 365 days?" The ad recounted how NRPC has selected and is reconditioning the "1277 best cars" out of 3000, has improved schedules "in most of our cities," has doubled the Metroliner fleet, inaugurated credit card usage, run Fun Trains in the West, initiated Northeast fare cuts and "Free Wheels" car promotions, begun to automate reservations, improve terminals, hire passenger representatives, order new uniforms, and appoint 4637 travel agents over the nation. The Amtrak ad admitted that "We still face major problems that will take lots of time, money and planning to solve," but added "But we're not going to stop until you get the kind of train service America deserves."

. . . . . .

ON THE COVER

Amtrak train 199, the PUGET SOUND, speeds thru the North West Portland industrial area toward a 12:15 on-time arrival April 30. Consist is one BN E unit, Santa Fe coach, two BN coaches, and BN Lewis & Clark Travellers Rest snack-lounge. Typical consist has 2 or 3 coaches; no domes are used. This train and its companion, the MOUNT RAINIER, were subjects of an attempted Amtrak discontinuance effective June 11, but Congressional fire made Amtrak back down. See reports by George Hyko elsewhere in this issue. Mr. Hyko made this photo and one of the same train on page 11.

. . . . . .

One of the major conflicts of philosophy over how Amtrak should be approaching its tasks this first year was the division between the "go-slow" people and those who wanted Amtrak to have more money to improve service in a bigger, faster way. So far Amtrak seems to have been content to follow the conservative, incremental policy. This conflict showed itself clearly in the Senate in late April when that body, voicing displeasure over Amtrak's seeming lack of progress, voted the corporation more than $400 million over its request for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1972. The money, in the form of grants, loans, and loan guarantees, would be for new equipment and improvements to track, stations and ticketing facilities. $50 million was specifically authorized for track and roadbed upgrading in 15 intercity "corridor" areas. If finally enacted, the new funding would give Amtrak $587 million instead of the $170 million it applied for. (Amtrak had originally wanted $260 million, but the powerful White House Office of Management and Budget trimmed this figure, telling the corporation its future after 1973 was too uncertain to justify such a large expenditure.)

So strong was this conflict in Congress that, following Amtrak President Roger Lewis's statement that Amtrak could not "sensibly commit" more than the $170 million it asked for (see Wall Street Journal, May 2), one Senator--Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.)--read into the Congressional Record a letter to Mr. Lewis asking him to "step aside" as President of Amtrak (May 4). Weicker called Lewis "either grossly incompetent or beholden to interests other than the American railroad passenger." He charged that "All Mr. Lewis has done has been to ask for operating deficit subsidies, dress up the decadence of his equipment and, at somebody's order, have Amtrak 'make a dive.'"

Roger Lewis meets the press.
Photo by Message Media.

EXHIBIT 1

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, D.C., May 4, 1972.

ROGER LEWIS,
President, National Railroad Passenger Corporation, Washington, D.C.

DEAR ROGER: For the reasons set forth in the accompanying statement, I feel the cause of rail passenger service in the United States would best be served by your stepping aside as President of Amtrak.

Candidly, I believe that once appointed to Amtrak your devotions should have been to the national policy embodied in the creation of that organization rather than to any individual or agency within or without the government.

Hopscotching is a tiring activity leaving the participant exhausted and ineffective.

That is not what our exhausted ineffective national rail situation needs.

Sincerely,

LOWELL P. WEICKER, JR.,
U.S. Senator.

The New York Times (April 30) also reported criticism of Mr. Lewis from within Amtrak: one of its original incorporators, Arthur Lewis, expressed disappointment with Amtrak's management. Said he, "I don't think Roger has dealt strongly enough with the railroads to get them to cooperate and develop a better program. I think more hell should have been raised... What we needed this first year was more of a mover and a shaker."

Following these critical remarks, the National Association of Railroad Passengers (May 5) circulated a letter to Sen. Weicker commending his initiative in calling for the resignation of Roger Lewis. Said NARP, "It is always disagreeable to deal in personalities, but the sum of Amtrak errors and omissions has mounted to the point where someone had to take the action you did." NARP also commended the Senate (in a May 4 letter to Sen. Clifford Case) for voting (73 to 7) more money for Amtrak. NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell expressed strong disagreement with Roger Lewis's statement that the money could not be sensibly committed before July 1973. Haswell indicated that new passenger cars should be ordered now and that track facilities should be upgraded soon. Amtrak apparently preferred to wait for "great technological improvements" in trains before committing much money to new equipment. NARP argued that such trains as the English APT will not be ready for several years.

Perhaps the greatest source of frustration to rail travelers is that all the time that Amtrak is inching toward incremental improvement of the existing system, time is running out within which Amtrak is supposed to show public monetary support of its trains. Half that time has now passed, and according to media reports, Amtrak has so far failed to reverse the trend of decreasing rail patronage, except in the Northeast Corridor. Obviously no fair test of

public response to good trains has yet been made, yet one can easily picture Washington bureaucrats hacking off much of the Amtrak system next year before a valid test has occurred. A concrete example at hand is on the Seattle-Portland route, where Amtrak decided to cut out corridor service after having done little or nothing to promote it.

These feelings are expressed well in a letter received by Sen. Magnuson of Washington from a San Francisco man who has carefully observed the situation over the past year: "Everyone points to mid-1973 as the time of decision for passenger service, anticipating that by then Amtrak will have shown us where it will and will not work.

"I don't see how we can expect any kind of fair 'test' of viability by 1973. There are too many things Amtrak, for one reason or another, has failed to do to provide a fair test of passenger services.

"We don't yet have revised fares (except Boston-New York). All we have is a pretty reprint and compilation of previously existing fares which Amtrak holds up as one of its accomplishments.

"Travelers on the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO still pay a ridiculous surcharge 'inherited' (Amtrak's favorite excuse) from the Southern Pacific which Amtrak refuses to remove, a year after gaining authority. In contrast, SUPER CHIEF sleeper passengers ride at coach rates, plus space charge.

"Amtrak moans that its corridor services are not doing well (except, of course, for the Northeast Corridor). But what has Amtrak done other than transfer better western equipment to midwest and eastern runs? Almost without exception, corridor service radiating from Chicago is slower, less frequent, just as costly as pre-Amtrak days. And Amtrak foolishly runs its major public relations asset, the Turbo, to nowheresville.

"Amtrak cites future new equipment, but has ordered none. We won't see any for several years, so cross this off the test period results. Its present roster of the '1200 best' is inadequate and tour movements are being declined because of lack of equipment. Yet superb dome cars (UP) sit in storage, unwanted by Amtrak because they don't have stainless steel dress. Amtrak even sent a diner out west for DAYLIGHT service that lacked a range for cooking.

"Southern Pacific continues to resist cooperation. Domes are banished because of clearance 'problems' but oversize freight routinely moves over Amtrak passenger routes.

"Amtrak is unable to give answers to special train requests that are submitted months in advance.

"The picture is not all bleak. There are bright spots: improved reservations attempts, hostesses, food improvements on some routes, and a generally higher employee morale. A few cars have been redecorated, and more will follow. But at the present slow rate of action, accomplishment, and innovation, only a year more of testing the market will not be good enough to give us answers to the passenger train question.

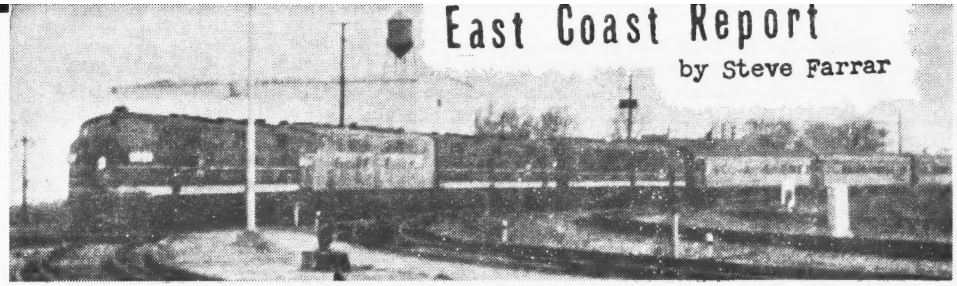
"Either we must step up the pace dramatically and immediately, or accept a longer test period--beyond mid-1973--before making those crucial keep-or-abandon decisions. There are bright and imaginative people within Amtrak who can do the job, but somewhere there is timidity and lack of force at the top. Roger Lewis's recent comments suggesting that Amtrak could not use more than $170 million are discouraging. The OMB view that funds shouldn't be spent until after service decisions are made is ridiculous. How will we ever know the real results unless better roadbeds, stations, equipment, schedules, and personnel are tried throughout the Amtrak system--not just in the Northeast Corridor?"

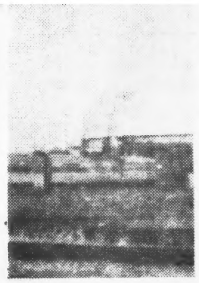
AMTRAK ANNOUNCES ROUTES TO RECEIVE REFURBISHED EQUIPMENT

Speaking at Washington on the May 1 anniversary of Amtrak, President Roger Lewis announced that, besides the BROADWAY LTD then on display, newly renovated equipment would begin service this summer on the following trains: the SUPER CHIEF, CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, COAST STARLIGHT/DAYLIGHT, SILVER METEOR, and MERCHANTS LIMITED.

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar





Instamatic photo by Steve Farrar of last seasonal northbd FLORIDA SPECIAL at Richmond. 2nd engine is in Amtrak paint. (See last issue)

WASHINGTON UNION STATION ONE YEAR LATER - Washington Union Station is undoubtedly the best passenger train watching spot in the nation. Where else can you find, in one place, RDC (B&O) and MU (PC) commuter trains; Amtrak and Southern; solid mail trains with RPO's (PC, lv. 10pm, ar. 4:05am); Metroliners; Turbotrain; GG-1's; E units of C&O, B&O, SCL, SR and sometimes PC; many private cars, both rail and individual; and clocker departures?

On Sunday, April 30, RTN was on the scene to check out that date's service changes and to see what Amtrak had accomplished in one year.

Very noticeable were the large European pictograms installed earlier in the week; above "To Trains" was a stylized diesel outline. Workmen were busy all over the station getting ready for the Amtrak equipment display the next day. New illuminated signs were going up over each ticket window. Large new track number signs were being installed in the concourse, and all the platform shed columns along the display tracks had received a bright coat of blue paint.

The first train I saw was Southern's southbound PIEDMONT, with 4 F units, 2 heavyweight mail, heavyweight combine, stainless grill-lounge-coach, and a heavyweight coach. About 20 passengers boarded. No. 5 usually carries more streamlined cars, but its northbound counterpart had wrecked Thursday night approaching the Potomac River bridge. A southbound PC freight entering Potomac Yard was derailing, and SR No. 6, moving 60mph on the RF&P passenger main line, was sideswiped. The engines ended up all over the ground. The cars were derailed, but not overturned. Of about 35 aboard, 5 had minor injuries, and no one was killed. This is certainly a testimony to the safety of rail travel. Passenger trains detoured thru the yard until the main was restored 5am Saturday.

The last consolidated BROADWAY/NATIONAL LTD pulled in one hour late with the most exotic consist since its inception: 2 PC E's (usually GG-1's), NYC mail from Chicago; UP sleeper & coach, PC diner, from Kansas City; ex-SCL Amtrak coach for display; UP sleeper & coach from Chicago; NH sleeper-lounge "Bay State" which would replace 10/6 sleeper and diner on that day's new BROADWAY; and Autoliner streamlined business car 100 in Amtrak colors. Car is owned by the Kratville car firm of Omaha and was to be used for VIP's on the Amtrak BROADWAY LIMITED display runs.

The SOUTHERN CRESCENT equipment soon returned from being wyed and washed. We examined the refurbished sleeper-lounge, and the lady cleaning the interior spoke up: "This is the cleanest train in the yard. We clean this train right or we get fired."

All the while the Metroliners brought hundreds upon hundreds of passengers into and out of the station. Some Metroliners are lettered PC and others have an Amtrak sign, but the 12 Metrocoaches that Amtrak recently brought out of storage from Budd's Philadelphia plant have a circusy red, white and blue paint scheme.

Washington Terminal's Alco RS-1's began placing the display equipment, and at the bumper post was a GG-1 in red, blue and silver! A far cry from PC black. Next came the BROADWAY, the entire consist in Amtrak colors and refurbished. There was the ex-B&O sleeper-observation "Dana," outfitted for light food service on the Washington section of the BROADWAY; ex-Seaboard Air Line and SP coaches, ex-PC slumbercoach, ex-SCL and UP sleepers, recreation lounge from FLORIDA SPECIAL, PC (yes, still PC-owned) twin-unit diner, and 2 ex-SP coaches.

The entire consist had wall-to-wall carpeting and new upholstery in a variety of pleasing, exotic colors. In some cars the carpeting extended to the windows, and some sleepers featured carpeting on interior aisle walls. Coaches had imitation wood paneling, black leather arm rests and a stylized Amtrak map. Members of Amtrak's design section gladly gave us a tour of their handiwork, which they have a right to be proud of. One said they have repeatedly resisted salesmen's attempts to sell the typical vinyl upholstery (as on PC and SCL) that makes passengers perspire, choosing comfortable cloth upholstery instead. Right on!

Soon four of the colorful Metroliner cars were placed on the opposite track. One observer noted that the uniform fresh gray paint on the underside of the Metros presented an appearance superior to the BROADWAY. Some BROADWAY cars had silver underbodies, some black, some not painted. Two Amtrak E units were placed next to the Metro, but they had obviously been painted at different shops using different stencil styles. Two ex-Santa Fe baggage cars were on another track; one would go to New York after the May 1 Washington ceremony; the other would serve as the Washington-Chicago mail car on May 2.

Next morning the equipment was open for display, and Pres. Lewis and Secretary Volpe were to make speeches, after which the TURBO and the BROADWAY were to make afternoon runs to New York. On May 2, there was to be a press tour at Penn Station, with a champagne christening on the nose of the GG-1. Key members of the press and Amtrak officials were to ride Car 100 to Chicago, where another press tour was planned.

After touring the equipment, we renewed our search for April 30 timetables. All tables published by Penn Central were displayed in quantity, as was C&O's card. But Amtrak and Southern had been unable, as usual, to have any timetables on hand on the day of the big schedule changes, and this in their headquarters city.

We were able to partially determine SR's little-known schedule changes from the Washington-Salisbury employee timetable; and, after a 5-minute search for a notice, a courteous ticket seller found that the PIEDMONT had been shifted to a 7am departure from Atlanta. The train runs a half-hour earlier, arriving Washington 10:15pm, and making an across-platform connection with the new NIGHT OWL which leaves for Boston at 10:30pm. No thru cars are operated, altho SR's terminal passenger rep confirmed that original plans had called for thru coach and sleeper service. We were disappointed to learn that the southbound PIEDMONT remains with its 9:45am departure, altho 15mins of padding were cut between Washington and Danville. We had hoped that the train would leave about 15mins after the arrival of the NIGHT OWL in order to arrive Atlanta before midnight. Reports are that the train cannot leave earlier because its piggyback connection (it is a mixed train) from PC in Alexandria is already tight. No. 5's stops in Manassas, Orange and Chatham, Va., were dropped, a move which may be only semi-legal. If a non-Amtrak road can cut out an intermediate point before Jan. 1, 1975, why not drop the end points also and run a ghost train? Oh well, nobody was riding anyway. You had to be going to Atlanta, Timbuktu, or beyond! Incidentally, mixed No. 8 is changed to leave Lynchburg 9:40am, arriving Washington 2:30pm.

The first NIGHT OWL had a GG-1, several deadhead coaches off the BAY STATE, 2 UP leg-rest coaches, SCL sleeper-lounge (drinks, continental breakfast), UP 10/6 sleeper. Side note: Instead of the normal 15mins in New York, the NIGHT OWL stays 35 mins northbound and an incredible 1½hrs southbound.

One thing Amtrak has not removed from Washington Union Station in one year are the signs forbidding persons without tickets to go thru the train gates. Why? What about someone helping relatives with luggage?

What about the free advertising that results from letting the public see your trains? Amtrak's trains are becoming something the corporation can be proud of, and old attitudes (and old signs) are going to have to go.

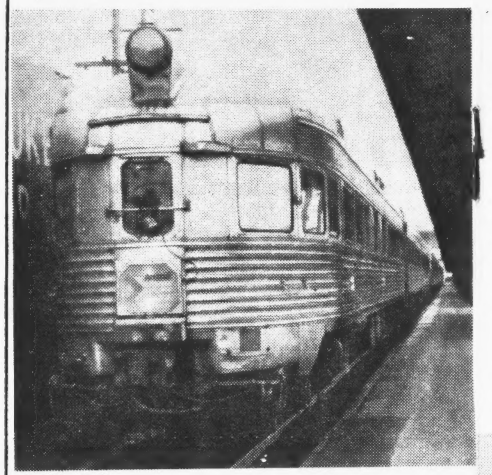
FROM AMTRAK TRAVEL AGENT BULLETIN NO. 7—"Effective April 1, 1972 we will extend and liberalize our policies on familiarization trips and tour escort privileges. When you have a tour group of 15 to 29 full fare paying passengers you will receive one free ticket; over 30 full fares, two free tickets. Amtrak travel agents and their employees will be entitled to familiarization discounts of 75% on one-way or RT fares as well as the accommodation charge." Rio Grande is party to this arrangement, tho Southern and Rock Island are not mentioned.

TEXAS CHIEF and CHIEF consists are to be interchanged at Chicago in order to save one full set of equipment, except that a Big Dome Lounge will run only on the CHIEF. The CHIEF arriving Chicago 7:30am will go out as the TEXAS CHIEF at 3pm, instead of laying over 26 hrs. Likewise, the TEXAS CHIEF arriving at 3:15pm will go out as the CHIEF next morning at 9:30. Both trains will run via Topeka, the SUPER CHIEF continuing to use the cutoff.

(continued on page 11)

Northwest Fiasco

by George Hyko & Jim Russell

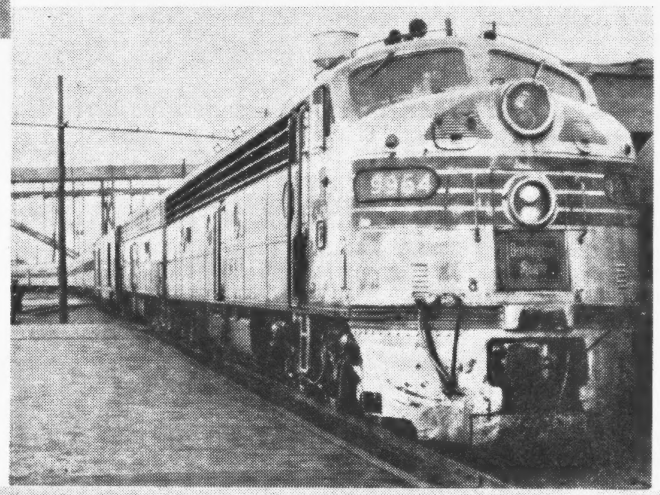


Amtrak's press release of April 14 had announced that daily service of the COAST STARLIGHT would begin June 11. At the same time, the two daily Seattle-Portland trains, the PUGET SOUND and the MOUNT RAINIER, would be discontinued because of low patronage.

Then something happened. The Senate was just then considering Amtrak's funding request, and Senator Warren Magnuson of Washington happened to be chief sponsor of the Senate bill. Loud protests were heard from the direction of the Pacific Northwest about the proposed discontinuances. April 27 word came from Washington D.C. that the alterations in train service in the Pacific Northwest, involving the STARLIGHT and the Portland-Seattle runs had been rescinded. The STARLIGHT would continue to run tri-weekly and the two local trains would not be dropped. The same day, reports say, Amtrak officials were converging upon Seattle to iron things out. Board members from D.C. were aboard the EMPIRE BUILDER and California representatives were heading north on the STARLIGHT.

What the ultimate outcome of the Northwest situation will be is not known. What is known to anyone observing the trains on the Coast is that for all practical purposes Amtrak has been phasing things out. Portland, formerly one of the busiest of stations, is quiet as a tomb. Tho it has the advantage of central city location, virtually no one knows that trains use it. Caught in the middle between Burlington and Southern Pacific influence—the two railroads most vociferously opposed to passenger trains—Portland seems to have gotten the message that May 1, 1971 meant the end of trains. Essentially no advertising has been done. The tired BN "E" units that haul the corridor trains appear decrepit. The image they project is one of decay and old age. On-time performance has been a large problem until recently.

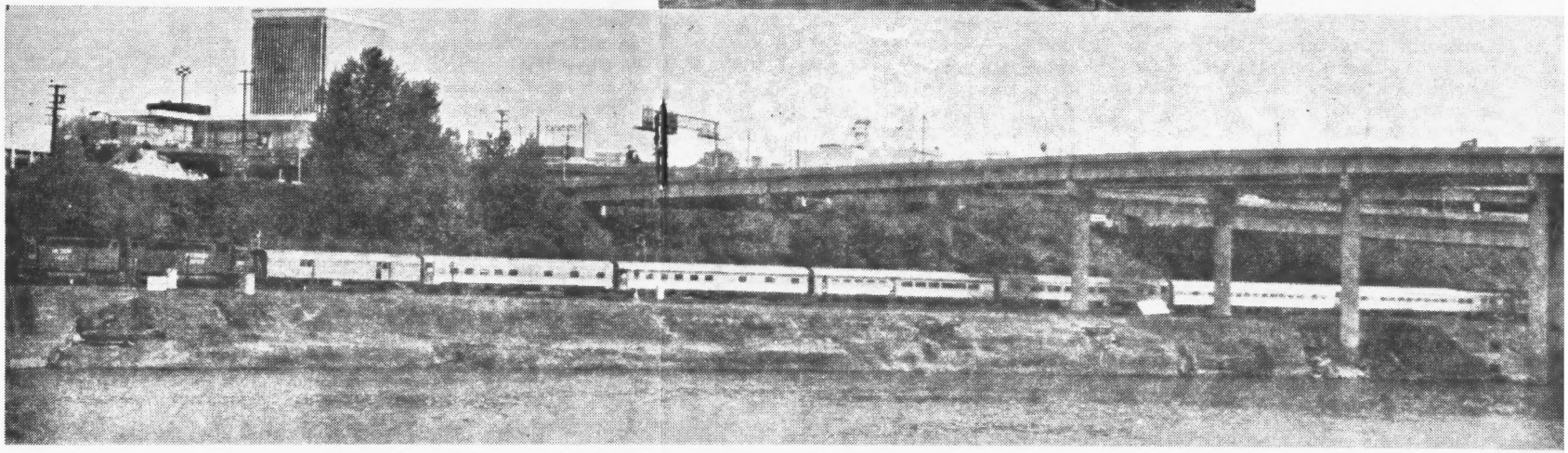
Even the STARLIGHT, improved as it is, suffers from problems still. Crew members are frequently lackadaisical and withdrawn, the SP sleepers still carry that familiar SP odor of stale smoke and dust that permeates all your clothes and requires a visit to the dry cleaners after a trip, menus are highly overpriced and have ridiculous food selections, and above all, getting reservations is as much a problem as it ever was before Amtrak arrived.



No fair test of rail travel has yet been made on these routes. And yet Amtrak sees fit to discontinue trains without giving them a fair shake. Worse, needed schedule improvements—daily service on the West Coast—apparently now must remain a dream. Amtrak doesn't have the means to provide good daily service on both the Coast and the corridor, apparently.

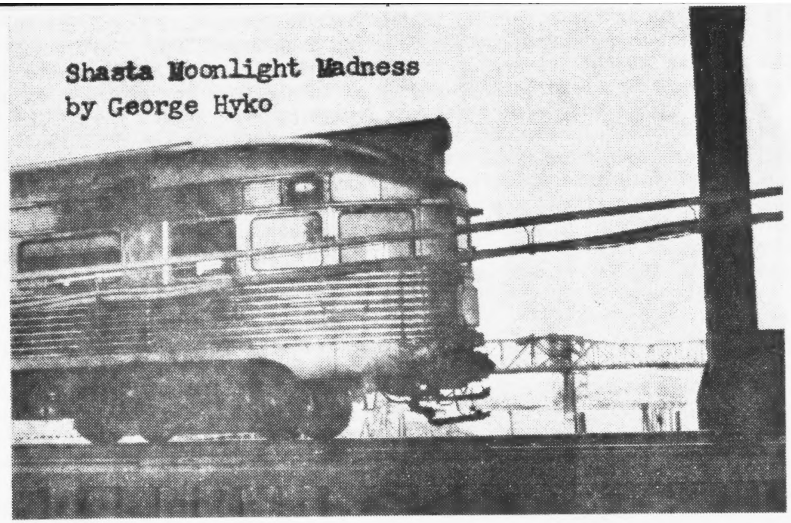
Ironically, the Senate is willing to give Amtrak much more than it requested, but Amtrak doesn't want it. The passenger here is being run out on a rail.

George Hyko is a Bay Area writer who contributes occasionally to RTN. He formerly lived in the Northwest.



Three views of the COAST STARLIGHT in Portland, shot by Geo. Hyko. The above are front & rear views of train arriving from Seattle on April 29 under BN power. Right, the May 1 northbound with SP engines moves along the Willamette River approaching Steel Bridge. Photo on p.10 shows train on bridge.

Shasta Moonlight Madness
by George Hyko



This train should be called the "Shasta Moonlight." Riding it on a moonlit night you peek out your window somewhere north of Redding and are greeted by a most wondrous lunar-lighted landscape. Lake Shasta is below you and the bright moonrays cast a shadow of your train and the bridge it is crossing on the placid water. Moving over several bridges, you edge along foaming, tumbling waters of the young Sacramento River. As the train turns, the lunar orb reflects from the clear mountain river.

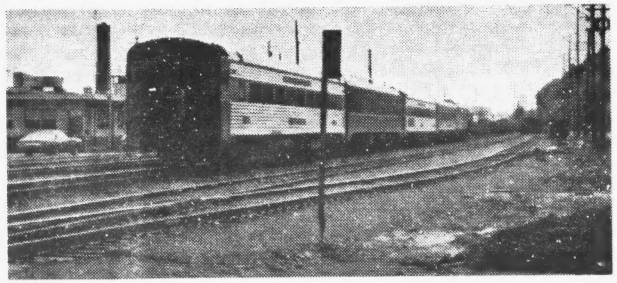
You draw yourself away to try to sleep, but no use in this moonstruck landscape. You must have dozed, for it's four a.m. and you are suddenly aware of the towering presence of Mount Shasta, its steep snowy sides already faintly glowing with the early light of an unseen sun. Your train winds and turns, and the huge peak moves back and forth across your window like some dancer on an unearthly stage. Try as it will, your silver vehicle cannot lose sight of the ever-brightening form of the domineering mountain.

The earth is fully bright now and you and your train are climbing the Cascades. Peak after jagged volcanic peak comes into view, snowclad on almost vertical sides. Endless waves of blue-green Douglas firs, snowsheds, winding tracks, precipitous cliffs, dramatic bridges, deep dark tunnels. As if frightened by the sheer grandeur of it, your train is now heading back in the direction it started; but no, another turn of track and you are northbound once more.

This fascinating train, the COAST STARLIGHT, is one of Amtrak's best ideas. If only more people knew about it, it would be full. You worry about the sparse patronage, but remember that it's midweek and not the travel season at that. It's a better train than it's been in many years, but to most people it's a ghost—the "Ghost Starlight"—something that exists only in the fancies of a few railnuts. Don't people you talk with reminisce about the scenic route that used to be before most of the trains were eliminated last May 1? Why can't they grasp the truth of the fact that you have yourself just ridden it? Or have you? Maybe you only dreamt it. Maybe it was the moon—but didn't you see the moon from the very insides of that nonexistent train? You're confused. Will the train run again when the timetable next says? Or will it fade away like a ghost because they say it doesn't exist and your story is unreal?

Back on earth—the damp earth of the Northwest, but uncommonly sunny for spring. You watch the silver Burlingtons zipping back and forth between those two almost-sister cities, Seattle and Portland. On time they run, carrying shiny cars behind cracked, flaking engines that look like ghosts from the junk heap. Amtrak says no one is riding them, so cut them out. But no one knows they're there! Why doesn't Amtrak tell them they're there? You can't tell them—no one would believe your hallucinations, just as they doubted the train in the Cascades. They won't believe them until they see them on television--the ultimate reality. What can you do in this Alice-in-Wonderland scene? You can't tell them and they can't tell them, and they tell you they're not there, and Amtrak says the people don't come to them, but who comes to ghosts? Who wants to ride a ghostly silver junkheap to who knows where?

The airhorn blows for crossings, and a silver blur darts behind a cover of boxcars, rushing to get out of sight so as not to be seen in daylight. A Congressman protests, but only because someone wrote him. How does he know it wasn't a dreamer writing about a ghostly train that he hallucinated? He fulfills his duty with a formal protest. Very well, we won't touch the darting ghosts, but for your punishment we'll not give you more moonlit Shasta nights. Choose the evil you prefer. Ghosts cannot be summoned out by earthly will.



East Coast Report

(continued from page 8)

MEXICAN SERVICE PLANS. Present plans are to branch off from the TEXAS CHIEF at Temple, then running via Austin and San Antonio to Nuevo Laredo. Service is planned to be daily, since the TEXAS CHIEF and the Mexican train are already daily.

RF&P 1972-73 FOOTBALL SPECIALS will not be run by Amtrak. RF&P had already bought the stadium tickets, and had to return them after Amtrak decided not to run the profitable specials. Hundreds of the most influential people in Richmond are in a rage over the matter, as the train was the only way to have a party going to and from the Washington games.

QUOTABLE QUOTE: "We are going to have a uniform policy on round-trip discounts. There won't be any."—Roger Lewis before the House Committee on Appropriations, late April.

AMTRAK SCHEDULE FOR NEW STATION CONSTRUCTION: Cincinnati—July 1. Boston and Richmond--summer '72. Los Angeles, Kansas City and Jacksonville—fall '72. Buffalo, Miami, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Tampa-Clearwater-St. Petersburg--winter '72-73. Houston services are to be consolidated at the SP station in May '72; consolidation was planned earlier but there were problems in turning the TEXAS CHIEF.

RIGHT OF WAY IMPROVEMENT—Amtrak told a House committee that it plans to increase the distance between tracks at El Paso, Mesa and Los Angeles to handle hi-level cars on the SUNSET LIMITED.

POTOMAC TURBO WILL BE REMOVED from the B&O run permanently—either on May 10 or 15, conflicting reports say. Train will substitute for the recently refurbished New England Turbo which will be displayed at Transpo '72 (Dulles Airport, May 27-June 4). Conventional trains will provide Washington-Parkersburg service at least until September, end of the one-year experiment. After Transpo, additional cars now being built at United Aircraft's Stratford, CT, plant will be added to both Turbos.

MISCELLANY: New York State got a last-minute injunction against April 30 reduction in Empire Service. (Don't know whether injunction held)

... Amtrak plans rail/sea package tours via Norfolk, Port Everglades and Miami... SR #1, Washington, April 29: 2 green E units, 2 black E's, DC-Atlanta heavyweight mail, combine, 5 coaches, diner (refurbished), 2 coaches, 3 sleepers, another refurbished diner, refurbished sleeper-lounge, and 5 coaches. Ten mins late, capacity crowd—several school groups returning from annual Washington pilgrimage... There was also a 20-car train of SCL and RF&P equipment handling school groups; train ready for 8pm departure for Miami. Amtrak misses out on this school group business from the Midwest because of the exorbitant PC and C&O fares... FLORIDIAN finally made it to Atlanta! On April 29, because of a freight derailment north of Nashville on L&N, the Amtrak train was routed from Louisville to Danville, Chattanooga and Atlanta via Southern, thence SCL to Jacksonville... Amtrak has sent a letter of intent to General Electric to purchase 50 U36B engines with steam generators... Sleeper "City of Waynesboro," last C&O sleeper in Amtrak service (removed Dec. 1), has been sold to Mexico for $4,000. Six C&O coaches have been sold to Mexico for $3,000 each... Buses were substituted for trains April 10 between New Canaan and Stamford, Conn., to allow construction of high-level platforms. Rush-hour train service continues... New service: Show METROLINER conductor your Washington valet parking ticket and he'll phone ahead to have your car ready. Cars are now washed and cleaned also... POTOMAC TURBO broke down in mountains of Tucker County, WV, April 20; since restored to service... B&O's direct trackage west from Washington Union Station will be removed for period of about 2 months beginning April 17 because of subway construction. Turbo and Brunswick-Martinsburg commutes now must back in and out of station via Baltimore line, adding 5mins to all schedules... METROLINER reservation system can handle only 24 trains, so effective April 30 4 trains reverted to the original manual method... In March, for the first time since METROLINERS started running, NY-Philadelphia traffic exceeded NY-Washington, 44,000 to 41,000... Since IC trains use Union Station, Chicago, PC handles running repairs to IC motive power, while IC continues to handle heavy repairs... There is yet another non-Amtrak train in the U.S.: CN's 687-686 between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg serve Baudette and Warroad, Minn.... Future plans for the BROADWAY: cassette player piano in lounge, complimentary meals, playing cards, magazines, stationery, hostess each day who would also act as hostess at dinner, motion pictures, music, announcement system...

WE ARE DISTURBED by the April 30 schedule change of the SILVER STAR. The previous excellent schedule established for the first time on Dec. 17 a daylight schedule from Savannah, Columbia and Raleigh to the Northeast. Finally, New York-Florida trains were better spaced throughout the day. That ceased April 30. The STAR now leaves Miami at 12:15pm, only about 3 hours after the SILVER METEOR. There won't be another train for 21 hours. The southward STAR will leave New York at 9:15am instead of 8am, just that much closer to the afternoon departure of the METEOR.

The only northbound train from Columbia now leaves at 2:15am. Having been stationed at Fort Jackson a year ago, we gained first-hand knowledge of the almost legendary patronage that SCL trains, especially the northbound METEOR, had built up at Columbia. No. 58 would thunder in each evening and block three grade crossings while it spent 10-15 minutes loading 50 to 200 coach passengers. We were shocked when Amtrak elected to re-route the METEOR and avoid serving Carolina points (even at operating stops!) effective Dec. 17. The empty coaches on the METEOR today are mute evidence that that was a mistake. Further deterioration in total patronage can be expected with the new STAR schedule.

Also, we noted that the coaches of the FLORIDA SPECIAL have been half-empty or worse this season. Passengers could have ridden to and from operating stops without delaying the train—stops such as Rocky Mount, Florence, Savannah, Baldwin (Jacksonville suburb), and Wildwood.

In short, the past monetary supporters of the New York-Florida runs —the intermediate Carolina points— have been and are being ignored by Amtrak.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

BEN BIAGGINI, President of SP, using his post on Pres. Nixon's wage-price control board to poormouth Amtrak, told a financial analysts' group in Houston recently that "The rail passenger form of transportation has been replaced by superior technology. The people made the choice and the government provided the facilities." He said that "Amtrak will phase out in the next few years." We went out, after reading this in the Houston Chronicle, and looked again at our beat-up automobile. Didn't know we owned a piece of "superior technology" before..... SPEAKING OF phasing out, Biaggini will presumably phase out as President of SP one of these days, since Chairman D. J. Russell will retire May 17 at age 72. Biaggini will probably become Chairman after that..... SP DOME lounges—2 of them—are being renovated on the interiors at Autoliner (Kratville) shops in Omaha. Amtrak will still lease (not buy) them for the refurbished CITY OF SF. Domes on the CITY will run only between S.F. and Denver when the train goes daily June 11, so there will be enough to use on daily runs (East of Denver the ZEPHYR domes are on anyway)..... TRANSPO '72 runs May 27-June 4 at Dulles airport near Washington: originally called an Aerospace exposition, there will be some rail technology represented, but mostly air, it appears. A TurboTrain will be displayed there, and one publication wondered how it would get there since there are no tracks. Would it be dismantled and carried by truck?..... BERKELEY'S COMMUNITY Conference on "Curbing the Car" April 29 was a great success—a full house of over 400 attending. Thomas Parkinson, Prof. of English at U. of Calif. told how his family gave up its car. Cost $120 a month to operate, but by using bus, taxi and walking instead, they spend only $40 a month now.. RAIL BUFFS is what San Francisco Examiner is now calling themselves in their expected negative Amtrak editorial April 30. Rail buffs, hawl They led the fight to establish the infamous Highway Trust Fund that killed rail travel more than anything else..... THE FIGHT over the planned Walt Disney resort in isolated Mineral King area near Sequoia National Park in Calif. has led to the Disney group proposing a cog-assisted railroad instead of the controversial highway to move visitors into the wilderness area. The Sierra Club is still cool to the idea of developing the area at all..... GOING AFTER the foreign tourist, Amtrak has prepared a red-white-and-blue brochure on "See America" mini-tours and vista-tours. It's written in 5 languages, and features a page "What is Amtrak" to explain the corporation. It's peppered with photos of American historic tourist spots and one large train photo— of the Canadian Pacific CANADIAN!..... AMTRAK REGIONAL timetables for Apr. 30 are now out—even Oakland has the Western one already—and they also list brief schedules for coming June 11 changes. Only change we could spot in the Western schedule is that the SUPER CHIEF is listed as arriving Los Angeles at 9am instead of former 9:05.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"(Passenger rail service is) perhaps our greatest under-utilized national asset. An America without a dynamic and growing intercity rail passenger service is as inconceivable as an America without a growing air transport system or an expanding highway system."

—Roger Lewis at Amtrak ceremonies May 1

"Amtrak is failing... Amtrak has done nothing to alter the system which is forcing more and more dependence on the private automobile. It is ironic that public policy is inviting more highway slaughter by encouraging more and more travel, by car, at the same time it is throwing away a railroad transportation system which is more efficient for many functions, much less polluting and at least ten times safer than the highways."

—John O'Mara in The New Republic, April 29

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB ***

"The Washington-New York line made a $2.5 million profit in Amtrak's first five months of operation in 1971. It was virtually the only bright spot financially in a nationwide system that lost $30 billion during that period."

—Los Angeles Times, May 3

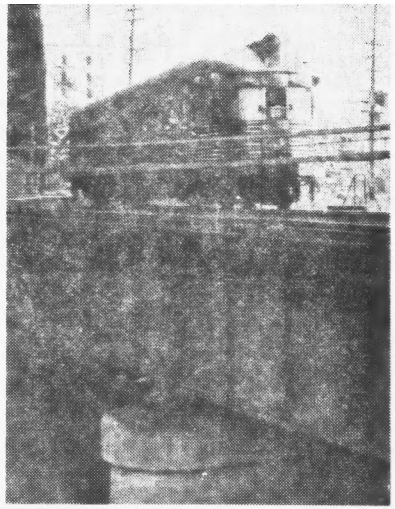
(Oh, come! Surely you exaggerate!)

COLLECTORS, RAILFANS, PHILATELISTS —

Announcing an unique offer from Message Media: Souvenir philatelic covers (stamped envelopes) commemorating the First Anniversary of Amtrak operations.

These covers were specially prepared and cacheted for the occasion. They are franked with various obsolete U.S. railroad commemorative stamps. They were specially cancelled May 1, 1972, Amtrak's First Anniversary, and carried interstate on the May 1 run of Amtrak's COAST STARLIGHT, the first new service inaugurated by Amtrak a year earlier.

Price is $1.50 each, 4 for $5.00 (Calif. purchasers please add tax).
Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley 94709.



AMTRAKING THE WEST

by H. R. Palmer

The "Yesterday" departs daily from Union Station and it carries with it the opportunity to see America and Americans in unguarded, hands in pocket, happy, tough, relaxed, hardworking moods. A real America, not just a picketline fence of look alike gas stations and roadside restaurants.

Lacking the speed of the jet liner, the flexibility of the passenger car or the cheapness of bus transportation, those dumbly delightful dinosaurs of transportation, the long-haul passenger trains, were snuffling and clacking their way into financial oblivion. Providentially, they were rescued by Amtrak.

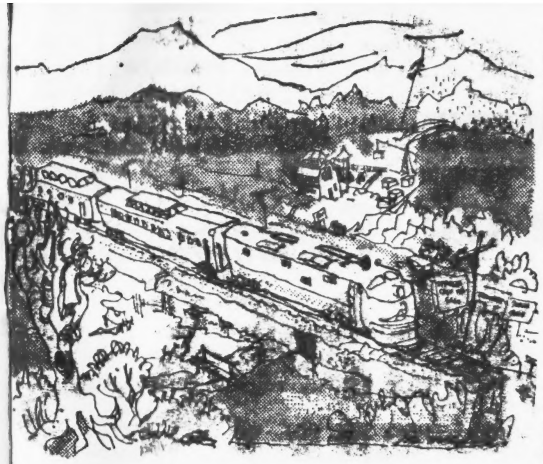
Travel by the long-haul passenger lines has several distinct, overlapping interlocking features which cannot be matched by car, bus or plane travel.

First, simply and foremost, the railroads have an exclusive patent on some of the most gut-bustin', eye-poppin', heart thumping scenery in the United States. It just cannot be matched by other modes of travel. A cross country jet will give you a swoosh eye view of a couple of city skylines, a wing dip at the Grand Canyon, some great cloud formations and the latest double feature and, though you've saved a lot of time, you've missed a lot of history and a lot more country.

A long distance trip by auto is not only an exercise in tedium, but it fails to compare with rail travel for visual excitement. Seated in the modern car, your level of vision is about four feet high. Driver and passengers are "bugbound" visually. This gives you a small mule's eye view of the world and, certainly, belt buckle high perspective bears little relationship to what a pioneer on horseback or in a covered wagon would have seen of this country on the westward move.

The upper level observation cars on many of the through passenger trains permit viewing from approximately sixteen feet high. From these cartop observatories, you look over, across and down at the scenery. No craning the neck around window posts or trying to see over the driver's head or around the next car. The trip to Chicago becomes a two thousand mile, three dimensional, cineramic adventure. You reside on a moving story-and-a-half perch and, suddenly, a great swath of America becomes your backyard.

For a man in the middle years or older who can recall the emotions of a small boy watching the West Bound Mail pounding through a curve, the power of its huge drive wheels trembling the earth and its proud arrogant banner of black smoke being flung across the country, the roof high observation car is an exhilirating experience. Seated in one of



the front seats of the car, you become sharp eyed, alert to minute changes in the train's operation. The darkening of the wisps of smoke from the diesel stack, the bright one-eyed signal lights, the sensation of power as the engine shoulders its way up a steep grade and the banshee shriek of the diesel's horn splitting the night air, all combine to form the illusion that you are the engineer. From this vantage point, remembrances of youth and childhood are easily recaptured.

Not only is the view from the incomparable dome cars unexcelled, but there is another reason train travel is unequalled in scenic attractions. Simply stated, the reason is economic. Roads, and particularly the modern super highways, were designed with the passenger car in mind. These are the soft pacifier pathways across the continent. No sharp curves, blind bends or unnecessary steep grades. The railroads exist for a different reason: To carry the greatest amount of freight between two points as economically as possible. These are the gut and gristle routes which were punched, thrust and driven across the country and, less than incidentally, across some of the hardest, harshest, most awesome scenery in America.

The train is not only scenery. It is also a mobile inventory of America's industrial might and its agricultural abundance. If roads are the arteries of the country, the railroads are the structural bones of the nation. The ride is a supernation's wares on display. Entire freight trains with their only cargo a Christmas tree assortment of Detroit's finest vehicles. The heavy freights carry loads of steel, farm and industrial machinery, construction equipment and other ponderous cargo so heavy that the steel rails, cross ties and roadbed flex beneath the weight and surely the earth must groan in protest. The fast express freight in a disdainful gesture at its major competitor—the trucks—piggyback a long string of semi-trailers, two to a flat car, with insulting ease.

It's a ride through and past some of the greatest industrial complexes in the world: Enormous oil refineries with their miles and miles of metal pipes, tubing and storage tanks looking for all the world like an immense chemistry set built for giants. Massive metal working plants thick and toad-like, squat against the ground. Towering circular concrete tubes appear more like modernistic apartment buildings than grain storage structures with their acres of weblike fencing of stockyards.

With the glut of incredible impressions that remain indelibly stamped on your memory of America's goodness and greatness, there are also the nation's flaws of industrial wastelands, city slums and other examples of man's ugliness to man and to the earth.

Passenger trains! Proud dowagers of a lusty brawling lineage that extends from the kerosene and candlelight days to the atomic age. The rail lines were not only a scenic backdrop to history, they made history as their rails and ties hemstitched the fabric of a nation together.

Minor irritations abound, schedules are slim, passenger treckage is a mere skeleton of a once vast network. However, for the hardy, the romantic, the nostalgic, and the adventurous, the rewards and delights of the trip far outweigh the disadvantages.

(Condensed from Apr. 23 issue of Northwest Magazine of the Sunday (Portland) Oregonian. Copyright 1972 The Oregonian. Reprinted by permission. H. R. Palmer is a Salem, Oregon writer. Illustration by John Waddingham, Oregonian staff artist.)